

**KERN COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS OFFICE****COMMUNITY RELATIONS****NEWS MEDIA**

It is the intent of the Superintendent to keep the public informed on all matters related to the education of Kern County students. For that reason, the Superintendent communicates regularly with the news media to inform the community about school issues, such as costs, curriculum changes, programs and services, special events and other items of public interest. Whenever possible the office works through the news media to provide maximum transparency.

The Superintendent is the chief spokesperson for the office. Working with the communications staff, the administrators will be available for interview by representatives of the news media and shall promote positive working relationships with media executives, editors, and reporters as appropriate. The Superintendent directs that all responses to media inquiries and items for public release concerning the Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office be coordinated through the Communication's staff.

**MEDIA ACCESS TO CLASSROOMS**

Media coverage of student learning at school sites increases public understanding of the many positives taking place in our classrooms. Media visits should be scheduled so that the classroom instruction is not interrupted. In the event that an emergency or "breaking news" situation brings media to the campus, the administrator's first priority is the safety of students, before responding to media inquiries.

**MEDIA ACCESS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS**

Federal law restricts the identification of special education students. The news media should never be allowed to enter a special education classroom, photograph or quote any student on the school site, unless written permission is first obtained from the parent or guardian. Giving media access to special education students without prior written permission from the parent or guardian can expose a school agency to legal action.

**IDENTIFICATION, ANALYSIS, AND LEADERSHIP**

The Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office seeks to keep abreast of community concerns, identify emerging issues of importance, and provide factual analysis and information.

The Superintendent encourages decision makers to seek counsel with respect to issues and make decisions based upon established policy, sound reason, and the common public good. Prior to taking action on sensitive matters, decision makers are advised to carefully consider differing points of view and the needs, rights, and interests of all concerned. Decision makers are encouraged to discuss decisions and strategies with the appropriate

unit supervisors. It is expected that issues with potential public ramifications will first be communicated to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

## **RESPONDING TO MEDIA INQUIRIES**

It is the responsibility and intention of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office to answer media inquiries in a timely fashion. It is our goal as district leaders to respond to members of the media and our district constituency in matters related to the education and safety of our students.

The role of the Communications staff is to serve as a liaison between the media and personnel. Whenever possible, media inquiries should go through the Communications staff so responses can be made by appropriate officials, and answers to those inquiries can be unified between respondents.

Member of the local media are instructed to call the Communications staff regarding all office matters. If a member of the media calls directly to a division, that person should be directed to the Communications staff for assistance. The person receiving the call should immediately forward all media inquiries to the Communications staff regardless of the topic. The Communications staff will then follow up with the media and arrange for response with the appropriate parties.

If a member of the media arrives at an office site unannounced, the Communications staff should be contacted immediately to respond.

In an emergency or crises situation where media interest is anticipated, the Communication's staff should be contacted and apprised of the situation so appropriate responses can be determined. When an immediate response is required, site administrator should be the only spokesperson(s), other than the Communication's staff and discretion should be used in releasing information. Communications staff should be contacted as soon as possible for briefing on the situation.

### Legal Reference:

#### EDUCATION CODE

- 32210 Willful disturbance of public school or meeting
- 32211 Threatened disruption or interference with classes
- 34144 Special meetings
- 35145 Public meetings
- 35145.5 Agenda; public participation
- 35146 Closed sessions
- 35160 Authority of governing boards
- 35172 Promotional Activities